DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 461 628 SP 038 043

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TITLE Completing the Circle of Education Reform: The Need for Standards, Assessments and Supports for Teacher Educators.
INSTITUTION Association of Teacher Educators, Reston, VA.
PUB DATE 1998-06-00
NOTE 17p.; With the assistance of Roy A. Edelfelt, W. Robert Houston, and Susan Arisman. A Report and Planning Paper from the Association of Teacher Educators' Commission on Teacher Educator Standards. For related documents, see SP 038 041 and 042.
AVAILABLE FROM Association of Teacher Educators, 1900 Association Drive, Suite ATE, Reston, VA 20191-1502. Tel: 703-620-3110; Fax: 703-620-9530; e-mail: ATE1@aol.com.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Change; Educational Improvement; Educational Quality; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Methods; Higher Education; *Preservice Teacher Education; *Standard Setting; *Standards; *Teacher Competencies; *Teacher Educators; Teacher Evaluation

ABSTRACT

This report describes an effort to enhance the effectiveness of teacher educators. The endeavor, which is in its early stages, is a work-in-progress initiated by the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE). The goals of the initiative are to reach consensus on standards for teacher educators; develop rigorous, fair, and feasible assessments related to the standards; explore supports needed to help teacher educators attain the standards; and examine effective uses of the standards, assessments, and supports in improving teacher educators, teacher education, teaching, and learning. The report presents information on the importance of teacher educators; the role of the ATE in this effort; why work is needed in this area; basic tenets of the work on standards, assessments, and supports for teacher educators; challenges and issues in developing teacher educator standards, assessments, and supports; how ATE's Commission on Teacher Educator Standards and its colleagues will proceed; potential uses and benefits of teacher educator standards, assessments, and supports; and current developments. (SM)

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Completing the Circle of Education Reform: The Need for Standards, Assessments and Supports for Teacher Educators

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A Report and Planning Paper from the Association of Teacher Educators' Commission on Teacher Educator Standards

SP038043

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Completing the Circle of Education Reform:
The Need for Standards, Assessments and Supports for Teacher Educators

A Report and Planning Paper from the Association of Teacher Educators'
Commission on Teacher Educator Standards

June, 1998

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Completing the Circle of Education Reform:
The Need for Standards, Assessments and Supports for Teacher Educators

Overview

One of the most important factors in improving student learning is ensuring that all students have high-quality teachers. The recruitment, preparation and career-long professional development and support of high-quality teachers are at the heart of the matter of improving education in the United States.

Therefore, the content and practices of programs to recruit, prepare and continuously improve teachers should be rigorous, relevant and grounded in the best available research and practical wisdom. Equally important, those who teach teachers should be models of excellence in teaching, inquiry and service to the professional community.

What follows is a description of an effort to enhance the effectiveness of teacher educators. Teacher educators are defined as education professionals who, as a significant part of their responsibilities, provide instructional and other services to aid the professional growth of teacher candidates and/or teachers.

The goals of the initiative are to:

- reach consensus on standards for what accomplished teacher educators need to know and be able to do
- develop rigorous, fair and feasible assessments related to those standards
- explore supports needed to help teacher educators attain the standards
- examine effective uses of the standards, assessments and supports in improving teacher educators, teacher education, teaching and learning

This endeavor is a work-in-progress initiated by the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE) and it is in its early stages of development. ATE has made a long-term commitment to pursuing the effort in close collaboration with colleagues in the liberal arts and other professional schools, in P-12 education, in other professional organizations, in local, state and federal government, and in families, communities, businesses and other entities with a vested interest in high-quality teaching and learning. One of the purposes of this document is to continue to solicit responses from this diverse audience of education constituents regarding the evolving direction, substance and strategies of the work.

The importance of teacher educators

There is strong agreement in the United States today on raising standards for what school students need to know and be able to do. If students and the nation are to prosper in today's and tomorrow's knowledge-driven, high technology and increasingly diverse and global society, among the essential foundations for success are:

- world class learning standards for all students
- rigorous, relevant and fair assessments to measure student progress toward reaching the standards, and
- appropriate support to provide all students with equal learning opportunities to achieve to the level of the high standards.

There is also widespread recognition that raising standards for student learning necessitates raising standards for what their teachers will need to know and be able to do. There is a growing consensus about the skills, knowledge and attitudes that teachers need in order to succeed in helping a very diverse student population

learn to their full potential. Increased attention is now being focused on how to recruit, prepare, evaluate and provide career-long support for a teacher workforce of excellence and diversity.

Despite growing efforts to upgrade standards, assessments and supports for students and teachers, another set of crucial players has received limited attention- those who teach the teachers. While working to upgrade the content, structure and processes of programs that prepare and provide career-long professional development for teachers, relatively little activity has focused directly on understanding and strengthening the quality, composition and roles of teacher educators in these programs.

This limited attention to teacher educators has serious implications for efforts to improve teaching and learning. Research on school improvement and student learning at the P-12 levels provides support for focusing on those who teach teachers. There is strong evidence that the quality of a student's classroom teacher is one of the most influential factors in how effectively a school student learns. Rigorous curricula, authentic assessments and other factors are essential contributors to student learning but it is the teacher who must translate, transform and orchestrate these factors into meaningful, day-to-day learning experiences for students.

Similarly, it is important to improve not only the content, structure and processes of teacher education programs but also to better understand and to strengthen the influence teacher educators have on how well their students (i.e. teacher candidates and teachers) learn how to teach. Just as accomplished teachers are role models in instruction, inquiry, responsibility and ethics for their students, so also are accomplished teacher educators role models in those same areas for future and practicing teachers.

The role of the Association of Teacher Educators in this effort

The Association of Teacher Educators is a non-profit, national, individual membership association committed to improving the preparation and career-long professional development of teachers and teacher educators. Members include teacher educators in colleges, universities, schools, state and federal agencies and other professional organizations. As an independent professional organization, ATE works to ensure that the education profession, in close collaboration with the communities it serves and the legal authorities to which it must be responsive, has primary responsibility for defining the nature of its services with regard to teacher education. With that responsibility comes accountability for the quality of its services and the results of its efforts. If there is to be public trust regarding the quality of teacher education and teacher educators, it is incumbent upon those in the profession to provide leadership in examining the quality and results of their own practices. It is also the profession's responsibility to continuously improve these practices in accordance with the highest standards of excellence. It is to this professional responsibility, accountability and continuous improvement that this work on teacher educator standards, assessments and support is dedicated.

In late1992, ATE began exploring the qualities (i.e. knowledge, skills and dispositions) that teacher educators should be able to demonstrate to be designated "master" teacher educators. Proceeding carefully with a comprehensive approach, relevant knowledge within education as well as in other professions was studied. For example, the groundbreaking work of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and, later, of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium in setting standards for, respectively, accomplished and beginning teachers was particularly relevant and illuminating. Roles, responsibilities and expectations of teacher educators were investigated and debated. Standards development efforts in other professions were examined.

The result was a draft set of standards for what highly qualified teacher educators need to know and be able to do. Hundreds of prominent teacher educators across the nation were surveyed on several occasions in

refining the standards. Open hearings were held across the country to garner additional advice and counsel on the standards and to explore their potential for improving teacher educators, teacher education, teaching and ultimately, student learning.[1]

During this developmental period, analyses of other standards-based reforms in schools and in higher education made it clear that standards would have little impact if they were not accompanied by rigorous and fair assessments and by supports for those who were striving to meet the standards. Thus, standards, assessments and supports are seen as essential elements for improving the profession.

The effort, now guided by an ATE Commission on Teacher Educator Standards, has reached a crucial point in its evolution. Seven core standards have been developed with indicators and potential sources of evidence for each standard.[2] (See Standards for Teacher Educators addendum.) Work is just beginning on developing performance-based and cost-effective instruments and strategies to assess and aid in the professional development of teacher educators. Workshops are being held at national and local conferences to explore the ways in which standards, assessments and supports might be used to both assess and assist the development of teacher educators and teacher education programs.

An abiding concern is ensuring that the work helps to define and increase the value added by teacher education. In particular, there will be a focus on understanding and strengthening the positive influence teacher education can have on increasing teacher effectiveness and student learning.

ATE is working with relevant stakeholders (e.g. others developing standards, accreditation groups) to ensure that the standards for teacher educators are well aligned with other standards for students, teachers, teacher education programs and schools. Of particular importance is close collaboration with school-based representatives so that standards for teacher educators will fit well with and be a positive force in promoting schools that are organized for student and teacher success.

Why we need work in this area

There has been no shortage of research and analyses addressing the quality of teacher education efforts in the U.S. While acknowledging that the quality of programs varies widely, much of this literature generally has been highly critical of the nature, scope and quality of teacher preparation and career-long professional development.

Criticisms of teacher education and teacher educators can be found throughout the 20th century but the last decade or so in particular has produced a plethora of reports from individuals, professional organizations and national commissions depicting the plight of teacher education in the U.S. The Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy[3], John Goodlad's Teachers for our Nations Schools[4], the Holmes Group/Partnership Reports[5], and ATE's Restructuring the Education of Teachers[6], Creating a Culture of Quality and Credibility in Teacher Education: A Call to Action[7] and Teachers for the New Millennium[8] are just a few examples of in-depth critiques of teacher education in the U.S.

The general theme that appears to emerge from these reports is that many teacher education programs are often under-developed, under-funded, inadequately rigorous and focused, and neither well grounded in research or theory nor in the day-to-day realities of teaching and learning. Some strong programs are described and can be found in a variety of settings around the country but the lessons learned in these programs seem to have had limited influence on increasing excellence on a broader scale. Most of the reports provide recommendations or frameworks for building on strengths and eliminating weaknesses.

Most recently, the acclaimed report of the bipartisan National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF), What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future builds on these earlier studies. It provides a thoughtful and comprehensive analysis of how the U.S. could respond to the challenge of providing all students "with what should be their educational birthright: access to competent, caring and qualified teaching in schools organized for success" (p.vi).[9] The 1997 NCTAF follow-up report, Doing What Matters Most: Investing in Quality Teaching adds credence to the case for increased emphasis on improving teacher education by concluding that "research confirms that teacher knowledge of subject matter, student learning and development, and teaching methods are all important elements of teacher effectiveness" (p.10).[10] The NCTAF reports define the universe of reforms needed to improve teaching and learning, examine the contexts within which reforms will occur and provide a strong conceptual framework for understanding how various improvements could be aligned for maximum cumulative impact.

Yet for all the insights this myriad of reports yields about the contexts within which teacher educators function, relatively little is said about the competence, capabilities, roles or professional development of teacher educators themselves. With few exceptions, key questions about teacher educators have not been addressed directly.

- What will they need to know and be able to do to be accomplished teacher educators and involved and productive advocates in bringing about improvements?
- How does one authentically assess whether or not they have the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to be effective?
- What support will teacher educators need to ensure that all have equal opportunities to meet standards of accomplished practice?
- How can the use of teacher educator standards, assessments and supports contribute to higher quality teacher education, more effective teaching in schools, and, ultimately, more rigorous and relevant learning for our nation's increasingly diverse student population?

These are the questions that this ATE-led enterprise is addressing.

Basic tenets of the work on standards, assessments and supports for teacher educators

The work of ATE's Commission on Teacher Educator Standards (COTES) emanates from an analysis of what has been learned from a rich history of teaching and learning-related research, practice and policy initiatives. Early efforts to analyze relevant research and effective practices and to seek expert judgements from a wide variety of constituents related to the improvement of teaching and learning have led COTES' to some initial conclusions that serve as basic tenets for its work.

- The alpha and omega of teacher educator standards, assessments and supports (SAS) should be student learning. Initially, the SAS should evolve directly from careful consideration of what students and their teachers are expected to know and be able to do. In the end, the test of the worth of SAS will be the extent to which they can be shown to have positive influences on teacher candidates/ teachers, on teaching and, ultimately, on student learning. Moreover, particular attention should be paid to developing teacher educators and teachers who have the knowledge, skills and dispositions to competently support rigorous and relevant learning for all students, including those with special needs, talents and circumstances.

- SAS for teacher educators should build on today's best practices while striving for a significantly higher order of excellence than currently exists. If they are simply reinforcing the status quo and do not convey a significantly higher vision worthy of future opportunities and challenges then they will not have served their purpose.

- Standards, assessments and supports for teacher educators are tools for change. Used well, they have the potential to increase the effectiveness and elevate the status of teacher educators and teacher education. They are a fundamental means for ensuring that excellence, accountability, rigorous inquiry and continuous improvement serve as benchmarks for teacher education and teaching.

- The standards should reflect a powerful portrayal of the professional life of a teacher educator excelling in and balancing teaching, scholarship and service. While focusing on what teacher educators need to know and be able to do to master their content and teach it well to a diverse student population, the standards should also promote inquiry and problem solving skills, individual initiative, creativity and risk taking, professional leadership, personal responsibility, cultural sensibility and caring, ethical behavior.

- The standards should also emphasize the need to build professional and personal relationships with a diversity of higher education and school colleagues, students, family and community representatives and others. These relationships will be essential to better understand the lives, talents and needs of the people with whom teacher educators will be working and the students whom they will be serving.

- The SAS should promote better, more intensive and more extensive ties and improved services among teacher education programs, P-12 education and local school communities. Teacher educators and their colleagues should strive to ensure that the conditions in all settings in which they work promote learning communities inclusive of all those who influence each setting. Each of these settings should be organized for student and teacher success.

- Research and scholarly inquiry should be defined in broader though no less rigorous terms than has often been the case historically. There should be a major emphasis on improvement-oriented research focused on school settings where P-12 educators are partners in, not objects of the inquiries. Teacher educators and their colleagues should continuously pursue research-based practice and practically-grounded research as an integral part of their teaching and inquiry.

- The advent of instructional and other technologies undreamed of a short time ago necessitates that teacher educators place a high priority on acquiring extensive knowledge and skills in this arena and that they use technology well to improve learning for themselves, teacher candidates-teachers and school students.

- Above all, teacher educator standards must be based on high expectations that all students, no matter their circumstances, can learn to high standards and that all teachers and all teacher educators have both the responsibility and the capacity to play a positive role in student learning and development.

Challenges and issues in developing teacher educator standards, assessments and supports

Standards for teacher educators, as with many other professionals, should focus initially on clearly defining the core that is essential in being effective. Standards that are too vague or general will be of little practical use and standards that reflect a reductionist or minimalist approach to defining what a teacher educator does will not do justice to the cumulative and interdependent complexities of the role.

A related dilemma in developing standards is in determining how far beyond core elements the standards should go. Currently, ATE's Commission on Teacher Educator Standards is considering the appropriateness of extending its work to-date on core standards to develop additional and/or more specific standards related to, for example, different types of teacher educators or teacher educators in specific subject areas.

The need for performance-based standards and assessments is strongly indicated. Standards and assessments should be specific about what's expected of the person (e.g. What content and context knowledge must they have? What must they know and show about how to teach that content and use those contexts well?) but flexible about how that person demonstrates attainment of the knowledge, skills and dispositions. Today's movements toward more authentic assessments with more sophisticated written and oral examinations of knowledge and skills and the use of portfolios are examples of innovations that need to be considered in developing teacher educator assessments.

Teacher educator standards, assessments and supports are justified to the extent that they are likely to promote a positive result in terms of their direct influence on teacher educators, their intermediate influence on teacher candidates and teachers, and their ultimate influence on school students. The difficulty of developing instruments and strategies for establishing such a complex chain of evidence is somewhat daunting. However, without this evidence there is no way to judge the value of the standards, assessments and supports in improving teaching and learning. There also would be insufficient data for making crucial decisions about updating and strengthening the effort. The issues related to understanding and strengthening the connections between SAS-derived activities and subsequent results are among the greatest challenges facing COTES.

Developing SAS is a very difficult, time consuming and labor-intensive process. Done well, the process requires that diverse constituents from inside and outside education confront and resolve differences in values and perspectives and find common ground without devaluing any of the perspectives. Rushing through or being closed about this negotiating process will undermine the credibility and potential influence of the standards. Standards also change with new knowledge and experiences so the negotiating and revision process must be revisited as appropriate. Approaches to developing, setting, assessing and supporting standards for other professionals outside education also need careful examination. Standards development efforts in medicine, law and in other knowledge production and knowledge-utilization professions offer insights into identifying, assessing and reinforcing standards that make a difference in knowledge, performance and results. Thoughtful analyses of the parallels and divergences between education and other professions are essential so that appropriate analogies can be drawn and inappropriate transfer of ill-suited features can be avoided.

Failure to align one set of standards with related standards can result in confusion and incompatibility of efforts. Teacher educator standards must evolve from and be compatible with what both students and teachers are expected to know and be able to do. Likewise, teacher educator standards that are not compatible with state or national standards for higher education or teacher education accreditation/program approval or school accreditation will meet with warranted resistance on many fronts. However, alignment-compatibility is a two way street. If the work of COTES suggests that improvements are needed in other standards, every effort should be made to negotiate such changes with appropriate colleagues in the profession.

Standards, assessments and supports have individual, collegial/group and organizational dimensions. SAS should reflect a balanced approach that recognizes and blends the needs and builds on the strengths of individuals, groups and organizations. Standards should also be organized and implemented in such a way that they can be addressed through a multitude of strategies by individuals, specific collegial groups and full organizational forums

In higher education, an understanding of the culture strongly suggests that voluntary and collegial approaches are the best bet for ensuring commitment to and meaningful involvement in a culture of rigorous and relevant inquiry and continuous improvement. There are significant advantages to be gained by capitalizing on and adapting the existing, firmly held norms of academic freedom, strong emphasis on scholarship, and individual initiative. A high quality, voluntary SAS system for teacher educators should be seen as complementing and

strengthening these norms. Such a system aids in establishing the right to greater freedom and support for teacher educators, in increasing the relevance and impact of scholarship and in multiplying the effects of individual initiative through a concurrent emphasis on collegial production, analysis, synthesis and use of knowledge.

Finally, there will be cost implications of instituting a system of teacher educator standards, assessments and supports. In this time of scarce resources in teacher education, a strong case will need to be made that the value added by such a system warrants the requisite expenditures.

How will COTES and its colleagues proceed?

To address its mission and goals, COTES, working with a wide range of other entities involved in related standards development and other education reform efforts, has developed an initial, action-oriented agenda. To do its job well, COTES must focus its mission and goals and shape its agenda and activities with a clear understanding of the priorities, needs and resources of a wide range of education constituents who influence teacher education and teacher educators. It is essential to continuously plumb the wisdom and perspectives of faculty and administrators in higher education and in schools; of local, state and federal policymakers; of professional education organizations; of parents, community, business and media representatives; and of any others whose resources need to be brought to the table to achieve the goal of getting and keeping competent and caring teacher educators in high quality teacher education programs.

Work-to-date suggests that COTES and its colleagues should strive to:

- synthesize knowledge, promote understanding and build support among educators, the public and other influential constituencies regarding the importance of teacher educators in improving teaching and learning in America's classrooms
- collect, analyze and synthesize the best available research and exemplary practices related to improving the effectiveness of teacher educators and teacher education
- reexamine its prior efforts in developing teacher educator standards to increase the validity, appropriateness, currency and utility of those standards
- expand initial work on the development of authentic assessment instruments and strategies to maximize the use and impact of the teacher educator standards
- develop high quality professional supports so that teacher educators can attain the standards by inquiring into and continuously improving their competence and confidence throughout their careers.
- recognize accomplished teacher educators so that they may be duly rewarded and effectively utilized by the organizations that employ them and by the profession at-large
- identify areas in which teacher educators need improvement and assist them in realizing that improvement
- emphasize the essential role of competent, caring, committed and ethical teacher educators in constructing and using knowledge and theory to improve practice
- identify, connect and maintain a cohesive community of accomplished teacher educators and colleagues from other settings who will continuously support and challenge each other
- align the development of standards, assessments and supports for teacher educators with related efforts for students, teachers, schools and teacher education programs
- propose specific actions to be taken by practitioners, policymakers and others to promote excellence among teacher educators
- provide national leadership for the design, implementation, documentation, evaluation and sharing of information of new and/or strengthened approaches to increasing the effectiveness of teacher educators.

ATE's Commission on Teacher Educator Standards should not and will not pursue such an ambitious agenda in isolation. In education, there is a wealth of activity on standards and in more broadly based reform movements that bear directly on the work of COTES. As mentioned earlier, The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium is developing standards and assessment strategies for the licensing of beginning teachers and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is doing the same for the certification of accomplished teachers. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education is setting standards for teacher education programs and units, including for professional education faculty. The National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification works closely on standards setting efforts with state departments of education and statewide professional standards boards across the country.

Of particular relevance to COTES is the work of the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) in developing standards and assessments to certify staff developers. COTES and NSDC began their efforts independently, each with a primary focus on their respective dominant memberships - school-based staff developers for NSDC and higher education based teacher educators for COTES. The two groups need to examine the parallels and areas of common and divergent interests in their respective efforts. The goal is to ensure that the most effective system possible be developed whether it comprises complementary, separate processes or a combined single certification process with appropriate variations to serve the wide range of different types of teachers of teachers.

Other professional organizations representing key education constituents are also essential colleagues. The American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education is the institutional-membership equivalent of ATE in addressing teacher education issues. The National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers represent the views of classroom practitioners whose expert judgements are crucial in defining what teacher educators need to know and be able to do. The American Association of School Administrators, the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Association of Secondary School Principals represent roles that have a strong influence on how teacher education is valued and supported.

Policymaker groups such as the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Governors' Association, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the State Higher Education Executive Officers are important leverage points for change. The American Association for Higher Education and the Education Trust support related work in improving K-16 education. The Council for Basic Education is involved with AACTE in aligning K-12 content standards with teacher education standards.

The work of the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development bears directly on essential aspects of a teacher educator's work. The perspectives of organizations representing the diversity of our students and of our society (e.g. the Council for Exceptional Children, the National Alliance of Black School Educators, the National Association of Multicultural Education) are indispensable in developing meaningful standards, assessments and supports. Finally, and among the most important partners will be each of the subject area groups and cross-cutting organizations such as the Alliance for Curriculum Reform, since standards for what students need to know and be able to do are integral to the work of COTES.

Other education reform efforts that include an emphasis on improving teaching and teacher education will provide COTES with additional perspectives on how their work should proceed. The Holmes Partnership, the National Education Renewal Network and the Renaissance Group are just a few examples of such initiatives. State-led efforts such as those in Connecticut, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio and Texas to enhance teacher education can serve as prime "laboratories" for examining lessons learned.

The U.S. Department of Education has recently-funded two major, long term efforts to improve teaching and teacher education - the National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teaching and the National Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy. The U.S. Department of Education also funds a range of other national research centers and regional educational laboratories whose research and development activities have much to contribute to COTES' progress. The National Science Foundation supports teacher preparation and enhancement efforts across the country. A multitude of other varied approaches to improving the preparation and continuing development of teachers is being funded by foundations, businesses, local and state governments and other sources.

Of significant interest to COTES in several of these enterprises is work on professional development schools as important vehicles for improving the knowledge and skills of teacher educators as well as other education practitioners. Modeled after teaching hospitals, professional development schools are centers of inquiry where teacher education interns, university and school faculty and the school community work together to inquire into and improve teaching and learning practices. The work of the Holmes Partnership includes a major emphasis on this innovation. NCATE's Professional Development Schools Standards Project has studied professional development school efforts nationwide and has developed draft standards for strategies and personnel in these settings. The validity and usefulness of these standards will be tested in sites across the country and should have much to say about the roles of teacher educators and their professional development.

COTES is also aided by a considerable literature on the knowledge base related to teacher education. Prime examples are research syntheses typified by ATE's Handbook of Research on Teacher Education[11] and AACTE's The Teacher Educator's Handbook: Building a Knowledge Base for the Preparation of Teachers.[12]

Potential uses and benefits of teacher educator standards, assessments and supports

In attempting to derive the greatest benefits from the standards, assessments and supports, there are many potential uses to consider. The uses should provide adequate incentives and benefits to a) motivate persons to pursue attainment of the standards and b) convince organizations that attainment of the standards by their personnel would be advantageous to the organization's welfare.

Since its inception, COTES has sponsored workshops around the country to explore the uses of teacher educator SAS. Based on a simulation developed around the standards, hundreds of diverse practitioners and policymakers from dozens of states have examined how the standards might strengthen teacher educators and teacher education.

In general, all uses and benefits of SAS are related to assessing and improving the knowledge, skills, dispositions and performance of teacher educators. More specifically, the standards, assessments and supports might be used as a framework for:

- developing programs to prepare teacher educators
- hiring and supporting new teacher education faculty
- selecting and honoring distinguished teacher educators
- considering work assignments for teacher educators based on their level and scope of competence
- collecting data on the activities, expectations and working conditions of teacher educators
- structuring debates and inquiries related to understanding and improving the competence, roles and functions, motivation, efficacy and satisfaction of teacher educators
- developing a more rigorous quality control system to increase understanding about and to strengthen the positive relationships among teacher educator competence, teacher education program effectiveness and improved teaching and learning in higher education and school classrooms.

There are many examples of how the standards are being used already for a variety of purposes. A doctoral program for teacher educators has been designed using the standards as its core. University faculty members are organizing their promotion and tenure portfolios around accomplishments relative to the standards. ATE initiated a national award in 1997 for honoring distinguished teacher educators, using the standards as selection criteria.

With regard to the use of the standards as an important element of quality control efforts in teacher education, COTES has initiated work to develop a system for the voluntary certification of accomplished teacher educators. This certification system would be based on the teacher educator standards currently being refined.

Assessment instruments and strategies now being conceptualized are described later in this document and would be used to measure candidates' progress authentically and comprehensively toward attainment of the standards. This voluntary certification system would provide national recognition for successful candidates as well as professional support to assist all candidates in improving their effectiveness.

Such a system would succeed to the extent that it was rigorous, meaningful and well integrated into the culture and the rewards and incentives structures of the workplaces of teacher educators. ATE will work closely with a wide variety of education stakeholders to investigate the validity, relevance, usefulness, feasibility and implications of a voluntary certification system for teacher educators. Of particular importance will be exploration of the potential of the system to build individual, institutional and public trust in teacher educators and in teacher education.

Current developments

As was referenced earlier, COTES has published an initial set of core Standards for Teacher Educators, which is included as an addendum to this document. (You can also get a copy by contacting ATE at the address on the inside cover of this document.) Performance indicators describing what an individual has to know or be able to do to demonstrate attainment of that standard accompany each of the seven core standards. With each standard is a description of the possible evidence that might be used to substantiate attainment.

The standards currently are being reviewed and refined in order to strengthen them and to make them consistent and compatible with other standards that are related to the improvement of teacher education, teaching and learning. As one example of revisions now being considered, COTES is currently examining the adequacy of the emphasis in the standards on content knowledge and on subject-specific pedagogical knowledge and skills. As another example, you will note that the phrase "master teacher educator" is used in the Standards for Teacher Educators while the word "accomplished" replaces "master" in this more recently written document. Since "accomplished" is the word used to describe expert teachers in the terminology of the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards, COTES will contribute to building to developing a common language by using the same descriptor.

An important point to remember is that the standards, like all other aspects of COTES' efforts are works-in-progress. COTES will continue to seek expert judgements from all its collaborators as development evolves.

No assessment instruments have been developed at this very early stage of work. However, consideration has been given to what general assessment strategies might be appropriate, effective and feasible. Current thinking is centered on a three or four phase review process. In the first phase the candidate would submit focused vita information detailing professional activities and credentials along with a letter indicating reasons for seeking certification and describing significant contributions made to the teacher education profession. Letters of recommendation from a variety of sources would also be required, including letters from clients of

the candidate. Two trained evaluators would review this material to determine if the candidate would advance to the second phase.

If the candidate advances, phase two would focus on portfolio development. Evidence must be provided that demonstrates accomplishment in relationship to the standards. Among the types of evidence being considered for inclusion in the portfolio are videotapes of the candidate's teaching along with the candidate's analysis of those tapes; a statement of the candidate's philosophy of teaching as related to the standards; documentation of leadership and advocacy activities in teacher education; syllabi for teacher education coursework/workshops/ etc. accompanied by the candidate's analysis of those activities and their results; and copies of publications or analyses showing scholarship related to the standards.

If the portfolio were judged adequate, phase three would involve a trained evaluator conducting an on-site visit with the candidate. (In the Standards for Teacher Educators document, an assessment center option was described but current thinking is that costs to the candidate for that option would be prohibitive.) Interviews of the candidate, clients and colleagues and supervisors would take place and additional observation or video/audio taping will be done in a variety of situations. If the candidate were judged viable after this phase, the final step would be for the candidate to appear before a review panel of expert peers. The candidate would have an opportunity to highlight elements of the portfolio and would also respond to questions from panelists who had studied his/her prior submissions and the analyses and recommendations of the evaluators. The review panel would decide whether or not the candidate should be certified as an accomplished teacher educator and would also provide substantive feedback on the candidate's strengths and weaknesses.

Again, COTES' thinking about the assessment process is at an embryonic stage. A draft of assessment strategies developed to-date is available by writing to ATE at the address on the inside cover of this document. COTES welcomes comments and recommendations on the substance and the suggested procedures for the assessments. Developing authentic assessments is among the most daunting challenges of this initiative and the plan is to proceed cautiously and with great concern for the rigor and relevance of the instruments and the strategies. Extensive consultation with groups like the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium who have had related experiences will be imperative.

A Closing Thought

As was stated previously, a system of standards, assessments and supports for teacher educators is a tool for bringing about positive change. The desired end is not just high standards, authentic assessments and strong supports for teacher educators. The presence of these elements must contribute to increased knowledge and skills and improved performance by teacher candidates and teachers and, ultimately, to increased learning by students in our nation's schools. Strengthening the competence and supporting the continuous improvement of teacher educators should contribute significantly to completing the circle of education reform.

The mission of ATE's Commission on Teacher Educator Standards is to provide national leadership in the development and effective use of standards, assessments and supports for teacher educators. COTES and its colleagues will proceed with acute awareness of how their work will contribute to the aforementioned goal of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future:

> "to provide every student in America with what should be his or her educational birthright: access to competent, caring qualified teaching in schools organized for success."

ENDNOTES

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